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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - DECEMBER 31

REF: Kinshasa 1169

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) During meetings in Goma on December 29, CHOD Didier Etumba apparently stressed that FARDC troops needed to immediately vacate homes they have occupied after residents had fled nearby fighting.

¶3. (SBU) Etumba called for more joint DDR operations with MONUC (Note: MONUC trained several FARDC battalions to participate in DDR operations in South Kivu, but the FARDC forces were subsequently deployed against the CNDP in North Kivu. End Note). According to MONUC sources, many civilian GDRC officials believe the FARDC can disarm the FDLR without MONUC assistance. Etumba rejected the CNDP assertion that a FARDC/PARECO/Mai Mai/FDLR coalition existed. The FARDC, Etumba reportedly emphasized, would never cooperate with the FDLR.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC reported no changes in FARDC positions, but it continues to express concern about the very close proximity of the two sides near Kibati (reftel). UN security officials noted a growing CNDP presence on the Kibati-Kibumba axis.

LRA - Operation Lightning Thunder

¶5. (SBU) CARITAS reported that approximately 400 civilians were killed by LRA attacks on December 25-27 in at least three different locations. The head of the Goma OCHA office said her "on-site sources" have recorded 199 civilian deaths in Duruma, Butima, and Faradje. However, she acknowledged that this number could rise, as more bodies are found.

¶6. (SBU) Unknown numbers of IDPs are moving towards Dungu. Some LRA troops dispersed as far away as Isiru, southwest of Dungu, so IDPs moving into the forest are potentially vulnerable.

¶7. (SBU) Some residents of Faradje who have fled the town (reftel) have arrived in Tadu and Kpodo. Additional groups are fleeing toward Watsa, south of Faradje, and also northward to Sudan. USAID/DART reported the arrival of IDPs in Masbe and in Duru, on the western edge of Garamba Park. Travel to both villages remains risky due to LRA presence.

GARVELINK